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ABSTRACT

This brief report summarizes a longer report with the same title. It focuses on the outcomes of academic advising within the context of research on contact between faculty and students, student involvement, and persistence. It is suggested that colleges and universities use strategic planning to design advising programs based on relationships of shared responsibility and focused on student success. It is noted that academic advising has shown positive benefits in improving student persistence, involvement, and motivation. Considered are ways advisers can engage students in the advising process and assist students in transition. Recommended is the systematic development of the advising process through collaboration of administrators, coordinators, advisers, and support personnel. Recommendations for student advising include: (1) promote concepts of shared responsibility for both students and the institution; (2) begin the advising relationship with an awareness of the larger purpose of advising and move to an awareness of details; and (3) develop a collaborative environment where students can contact many members of the college community for answers to questions that arise in academic planning. Contains six references. (GLR)

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Academic Advising for Student Success: A System of Shared Responsibility

by Susan H. Frost

Although most college students are advised about their courses of study, few people view academic advising as a means of enhancing the positive outcomes of college. Research on college students suggests that activities like advising could increase students' involvement in their college experiences. This report focuses on outcomes of advising in the context of research on contact between faculty and students, students' involvement, and persistence. Colleges and universities could use strategic planning to design advising programs based on relationships of shared responsibility and focused on students' success. The information is appropriate for advising administrators, faculty advisers, professional advisers, peer advisers, and others who work to increase the positive outcomes of college through academic advising.

Is a New Look at Academic Advising Warranted?

Research on positive outcomes of college and on the diverse needs of students making up today's student population suggests that a new look at advising is needed. Findings link academic advising directly and indirectly to contact between faculty and students and persistence in college. For example, involvement influences learning and defines effective institutions as those having the capacity to involve students (Astin 1984). Research also indicates that frequent and meaningful contact with faculty members, especially contact focusing on intellectual or career-related issues, seems to increase students' involvement and motivation (Astin 1984; Pascarella 1980, 1985; Terenzini, Pascarella, and Lorang 1982; Tinto 1987). These results can be important to advisers, for they have the capacity to increase meaningful contact with students and to encourage them to persist in college.

One essential way to engage students in advising is to design programs that acknowledge their individual needs. Diversity not only characterizes today's student population, but also contributes to a pluralistic society that benefits all members of the college community. Because advisers can encourage students to explore their differences as positive factors, the advising relationship can be particularly responsive to pluralism. Developmental advisers involve students in the advising relationship and demonstrate that circumstances surrounding individual differences, not stereotypical differences, define students' needs.

Advisers can also respond to students who are in stages of transition. Regardless of age or personal situation, some students do not "fit" easily into college life—freshmen, students with undecided majors, transfer students, and adult students, for example. Advising freshmen is especially important. Academic integration seems to influence freshmen's development of academic skills (Tinto 1987). Advisers who facilitate assimilation to college understand factors affecting freshmen's fit and persistence. They share responsibility for advising with students and begin educational and career planning. Perceptive advisers encourage all students in transition to focus first on exploring life, career, and educational goals. Then students in transition seem better equipped to select educational programs, choose courses, and schedule classes (Tinto 1987).

What Themes Are Evident When Advising Is Considered in the Context of Research?

The central theme is one of shared responsibility, an essential ingredient in an effective relationship between adviser and student. Most students expect specific answers to short-term questions about courses, schedules, and procedures from advisers. But advising can be viewed in a broader way. Advisers who first encourage students to consider larger questions about educational and career goals and then help students plan their courses of study share responsibility for advising with students. As students frame questions about the future and seek the information they need to formulate answers, they practice behavior useful in future situations.

Shared responsibility is also important at the institutional level. Constructing connections between academic affairs, student affairs, and support services can encourage students to become involved and to persist in college. When a broad base of the college community plans for, implements, and evaluates advising services, advising can become a systematic enterprise of the institution that enhances the educational outcomes of college.

How Can Advising Become an Essential And Systematic Enterprise?

When collaboration and shared responsibility are central to advising, an advising **system** can result. Colleges are systematic enterprises comprised of linking and interactive parts, and people and programs working together are important in achieving positive outcomes (Tinto 1987). As administrators, advising coordinators, individual advisers, and those who support advising work together, the advising program can become an essential system in the academic community. Components of the planned system are selecting,

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training, and recognizing advisers, and evaluating all components of the program.

What Are the Long-term Outcomes of Such an Advising System?

Ideally, advising is first a means of exploring careers and majors and then a method for selecting courses and arranging schedules. As partners in the process, students can learn to discover options, frame questions, gather information, and make decisions, which can increase their involvement in college and encourage them to persist to graduation.

Institutions as well as individuals benefit from the efforts of administrators, coordinators, advisers, and support personnel who work together to construct an advising system. When representatives from these groups plan, train for, implement, and evaluate advising, they can create a network of cooperation that can be transferred to other aspects of the college. They also model collaborative behavior for students. Program planning centered around the institution's mission and all students' needs can result in a dynamic advising system having the capacity to adapt to internal and external change.

The move from an advising system based on merely supplying answers to students' questions about scheduling and registration to a system of academic planning will not take place in one term. Nor will it take place in one academic year. The move is a deliberate, collective effort that involves changes in practices **and** attitudes. A look at the historical development of advising suggests that change is difficult at best. While some solutions to questions about broad-based approaches to advising exist, most programs still center on prescriptive activities (Habley and Crockett 1988). Even though involved students appear to be successful students, most advising programs seem to offer students short-term relationships with advisers. If the current literature on advising has one theme, it is that of shared responsibility. This theme can guide those who plan for and manage programs as well as those who interact with students. If applied creatively and with an eye to the future, perhaps academic advising relationships can provide learning experiences that prove valuable to students during the college years and beyond.

What Recommendations Can Improve Advising?

The following recommendations offer a beginning point for an advisory system based on shared responsibility. They are not intended as final solutions, but as a framework for planning and progress.

1. **Consider advising as an institutionwide system centered around students' involvement and positive college outcomes.**
2. **Promote concepts of shared responsibility for both students and the institution.**
3. **Begin the advising relationship with an awareness of the larger purpose of advising and move to an awareness of details.**
4. **Plan for success.** All participants in advising should be involved in an ongoing, strategic effort to center advising around a meaningful mission.
5. **Evaluate** the overall program and individual contributors; results can provide direction for change.
6. **Collaborate.** A shared advising relationship leads students to contact many members of the college community for answers to questions that arise in academic planning.

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